



Loudoun County, Virginia
Department of Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Management

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For Immediate Release:

Firefighters Rescue Dogs from Icy Ponds in Two Separate Incidents

Around 7:37 AM, Friday, March 6, Loudoun County received a 9-1-1 call for a report of a person trapped in an icy pond in the 300 block of Whipp Drive SE in Leesburg. Fire and rescue personnel from Leesburg responded to the scene.

Upon arrival, firefighters observed a dog in the water, approximately 70 feet from shore, struggling to get back on the ice. Two members of the ice rescue team, Firefighter Wade Mahaffey and Firefighter Jason Ilowite, suited up and entered the water. Secured to a safety line, Mahaffey and Ilowite worked together to rescue the dog and bring him safely to shore to his owner at approximately 7:51 AM.

The dog's owner was out for a walk with the dog. Since her regular path was covered in snow, she took an alternate route along a retention pond. Walking, she slipped and fell onto the ice. When she fell, the dog broke free, chasing after a gaggle of geese near a fountain in the center of the ice covered pond. Attempting to retrieve the dog, the owner fell, becoming partially submerged in the icy water. She was able to rescue herself from the ice and made it to a neighbor's to call for assistance.

Both owner and dog were checked out at the scene for potential injuries. The owner transported her dog to the veterinarian for further checkout.

Around 10:36 AM, March 6, Loudoun County received a second 9-1-1 call for a report of a dog trapped in the icy water of a retention pond in the 21000 Block of Ridgetop Circle in Sterling.

Arriving on the scene, firefighters observed a small dog struggling in the water approximately 120 feet from shore. Witnesses reported that a second dog may have gone underwater. Initial attempts to reach the dog from a tower truck proved unsuccessful. Members of the ice water rescue team arrived on the scene. Once suited up, Firefighter Jeremy Mader entered the water to rescue the animals. Mader was able to reach and rescue the first dog about 10:58 AM. The second dog was pulled from the icy water moments later at 11:00 AM. Following numerous attempts to resuscitate the dog, firefighters were unable to revive the dog. The first dog was transported a local veterinarian by Loudoun County Animal Services.

Loudoun County Fire-Rescue reminds residents to stay off the ice in retention ponds, ponds, creeks, rivers, and lakes, remaining watchful for children and pets attempting to venture onto the ice. With fluctuating temperatures in the area, the ice is unstable and unsafe. It may seem that the ice is thick enough to walk on, but the actual strength of the ice may be far less than it appears particularly when temperatures exceed the freezing mark.

If you should find yourself in a situation where a person or animal has fallen through the ice, Loudoun emergency personnel ask that you:

- Call 911 immediately.
- Do not attempt to enter the water. Often, untrained rescuers become a victim themselves in a matter of seconds.
- Stay calm and encourage the victim to do the same.
- If you feel it is safe to do so, extend an object, such as a tree branch or rope, to the victim.

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Every year, people, pets and livestock fall through ice in Loudoun County, oftentimes resulting in severe injury or death. Property owners are encouraged to install temporary fencing if possible around icy water areas, and to ensure that animals have access to plenty of fresh drinking water. Animals cannot get adequate hydration by eating snow or ice and will wander onto frozen ponds in search of water. Pet owners are also reminded to be vigilant about ensuring their pet does not venture onto frozen water ways. As the winter comes to a close, Loudoun's waterways will begin to thaw posing an even greater risk of ice rescue emergencies. Most importantly remember, do not attempt to rescue the person or animal yourself, always wait for trained personnel to arrive.

Please keep your family and pets safe, stay off the ice.

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